

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 003843

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MTS, INR/EAP, S/CT, USIP - SOLOMON
NSC FOR GREEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/20/2015

TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PINS](#) [KISL](#) [MY](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: GRP-MILF OPTIMISTIC ON TALKS, MALAYSIAN MONITORS,
AND CONTINUED COOPERATION AGAINST ASG/JI

REF: MANILA 3435

Classified By: Political Officer Joseph Saus for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (C) Summary. The GRP and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) maintain their readiness to resume exploratory talks, although GRP officials indicate Malaysian facilitators remain concerned about distractions stemming from the still unresolved political situation in Manila. Both parties appreciate the work of the Malaysian-led International Monitoring Team (IMT), which will be renewed for another year through October 2006. GRP-MILF cooperation continues against Jemmah Islamiyah (JI) and Abu Sayyaf Group (ASG) fugitives in west-central Maguindanao province. There are indications that the fugitives remain on the run and distrustful of many locals, although some individuals in the area may be assisting them in return for money. End Summary.

GRP and MILF Optimistic, Malaysia Skittish

2. (C) MILF technical advisor Attorney Musib Buat told poloff on August 17 that the next round of exploratory talks will happen "soon." He noted that the last round in July was postponed on account of the delicate political situation in Manila. On August 20, the MILF technical working group will meet with the MILF peace panel to discuss the remaining "governance aspect" of the negotiations, according to Buat. (Note. The parties previously agreed to a final peace agreement framework centered on the concept of "ancestral domain," territory, governance, and allocation of natural resources. End Note.)

3. (C) On August 18, GRP Peace Panel Secretariat Chairman, Ryan Sullivan, echoed Buat's optimism regarding the GRP-MILF peace process, but he blamed Malaysia for the delays, citing Kuala Lumpur's lingering reticence due to the delicate political situation in Manila over the past few months. Nonetheless, he stressed "both sides are expectant" and ready to restart the exploratory talks, pending the availability of the Malaysians.

IMT Set For Renewal

4. (C) Buat was very supportive of the IMT's ceasefire monitoring role. The MILF's website also showcased an article voicing strong support for the continued mandate of the IMT, and thanks to departing IMT Chief of Mission Major General Zulkifeli for his contribution to the ceasefire and the wider cause of peace in Mindanao. The IMT has a yearly mandate and both the GRP and MILF peace panels petitioned the Malaysian government through the Philippine Department of Foreign Affairs to extend the IMT's tour of duty for another year starting in October 2005. According to Sullivan, another batch of Malaysians will arrive by early September, and the next contingent will have more civilians to focus on economic development matters.

Antiterror Operations Continue

5. (C) The Joint Monitoring Assistance Center (reftel) continues to coordinate effectively AFP and MILF information and movements. Sullivan reported "renegade" MILF commander Wahid Tondok and the deputy commander of Ameril Umbra Kato were "suspended from the MILF" resulting from their disregard of the Central Committee directive to cease harboring or cooperating with the JI and ASG. Several lower-level ASG members have been neutralized in the operation (now in its second month), Sullivan claimed. He added ASG leader Khadaffy Janjalani's "brother-in-law" had been killed, but provided no further information. Some MILF members, however, continue to assist ASG in return for money, Sullivan said, although he emphasized the ASG, because of the current operations against them, is particularly cautious where they travel and who they approach for help.

6. (C) Buat confirmed to poloff the ongoing heated debate in the Central Committee regarding recent MILF cooperation with the AFP, noting the MILF draws the line at joint operations

because they do not want to draw excessive public attention to the cooperation out of concern that it may weaken their position in the peace negotiations. Buat said several senior advisors argue law and order is the responsibility of the GRP and the police, not the MILF. Poloff suggested communities also share the burden in self-policing and in helping authorities to clear out criminal or terrorist elements.

Visit Embassy Manila's Classified SIPRNET website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eap/manila/index.cfm>

You can also access this site through the State Department's Classified SIPRNET website:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/>
JOHNSON